

13 February 2008

Miss C Andrews
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Andrews

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 February 2008 to look at work in religious education (RE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of RE, the visit had a particular focus on the subject's contribution to the promotion of community cohesion.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

The standards pupils attain in RE are broadly average and their achievement is good.

- Standards in RE are broadly in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus in relation to the area of attainment related to 'learning about' religion, and above expectations in relation to the area relating to 'learning from' religion. Pupils' overall achievement in RE is good.
- Pupils regularly use technical vocabulary when writing or talking about religions. They show a good balance between knowledge of religious practices and the underlying beliefs. They can give examples of the impact religion has on people's lives.

- The more able pupils in years 4 and 5 benefit from being in a mixed age class and achieve particularly well.
- The personal development of pupils in the context of RE is outstanding. They show respect for other cultures and points of view and develop very good evaluative skills. They discuss with confidence questions about identity, values and commitments and relate the teachings of religions to their own experience.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge in relation to the parts of the syllabus they teach. The quality of lesson planning is very good. Activities are designed carefully to extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- In both lessons seen, teaching was methodical and demanding, requiring pupils to generalise from prior knowledge, make decisions and give reasons and examples for these decisions. Teachers challenge unclear reasoning and pupils respond confidently.
- Lessons require independent and group work that develops pupils' collaborative skills. Lessons are designed to be relevant to pupils' lives and often make a strong contribution to their citizenship education. For example, in one lesson pupils negotiated the most important community values.
- Teaching and learning are varied and provide opportunities for practical work to develop empathy with and understanding of other people's traditions. For example, pupils made a Sukkah in the school grounds as part of their learning about Judaism.
- Assessment is developing well. Teachers notate their lesson plans with evaluations of pupils' learning and are beginning to identify individuals who perform above or below expectation.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the RE curriculum is good.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the new Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus will be fully implemented by the end of the year, as required.
- Continuity and progression in the curriculum are generally good. A rolling programme makes syllabus coverage possible and avoids repetition.
- Long and medium term planning is very good and contributes to the high quality teaching in the school.
- The transition unit from Key Stage 2 to 3, although a good idea in principle, is not used as effectively as it might because it is part of the rolling programme rather than reserved for Year 6.
- RE is closely related to personal, social and health education and citizenship, which contributes to the strength of pupils' progress in

relation to 'learning about'. Planning is in place to revise the curriculum to forge closer links with other subjects.

- Enrichment activities are a great strength of the RE curriculum. The school forges strong links with people from the village who have arrived from other countries and, thanks to their co-operation and the good planning, pupils have high quality opportunities to engage in activities and celebrations from other cultures, such as Indian dancing and celebrations of Divali and Chinese New Year.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- You took over management of RE recently and are committed to high standards and good quality teaching. The school makes equal demands of RE teaching as any other foundation subject and this contributes to the good teaching and self-evaluation.
- The school development plan includes a timetable for implementing the new agreed syllabus and for identifying skills across foundation subjects in order to forge closer links.
- Good procedures are in place for sharing resources with other local schools. Excellent links exist with parents and outside agencies to support RE provision.
- Well developed plans for extending assessment and the recording of pupils' progress in RE are soon to be implemented. Teachers' evaluation of their pupils' learning is providing a good foundation for the new arrangements.
- The impact of good subject leadership and management is seen in the consistently high quality of learning in RE across the school.

The contribution of RE to promotion of community cohesion

RE makes a good contribution to the promotion of community cohesion in a school. The overall ethos of learning in lessons encourages a positive attitude towards faith and diversity amongst the pupils. The school's excellent links with individuals from other religions and cultures living in the community gives pupils valuable opportunities to learn about and experience the diversity of religion at first hand. The contributions of a Finnish Comenius student and an American parent give pupils insight into the impact of cultural diversity on celebrations of Christianity. The school's links with Kenya also contribute to pupils' multicultural awareness and their understanding of international issues such as conservation.

Inclusion

Inclusion in RE is good overall and is reflected in the good individual support pupils receive in the subject. Mixed age classes provide opportunities for more able younger pupils to progress at their own pace, although provision for the few who reach higher levels in year 4 or 5 needs strengthening.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving provision for the older pupils who are working towards the higher levels.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop RE in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and SACRE and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Wintersgill
Additional Inspector